

hopper's corner store is
silber's pharmacy. are those
blue smudges gift-wrapped
candy boxes? whitman's? a
red globe and a green hang like the
scales of justice, still in
balance, or like those of a
pawnbroker. the awning
advertises, redundantly,
prescriptions, drugs, and
"ex-lax." this was still the
long dark age before penicillin,
though, and i recall the nauseating
sulfa drugs still prevalent
throughout the 1940s.
the dependency to be feared
was only laxatives. i imagine that
most remedies relied rather heavily
on the placebo effect.

a happier time?
i suppose so.
the jazz age.
expatriates. the roaring twenties.
the eve of the great crash.

still, none of that in
evidence here.
this store is open at night.
drapes, blue and turquoise,
mask what's going on inside.

the prohibition era.
the one, that is, that
preceded our own.

ARE THEY REPLACED AS SOON AS THEY ACQUIRE A NEW
YORK ACCENT?

what most impresses me
about the irish bars of new york city
is that every single one has an
authentic irish bartender.

OUR ANNUAL ART CALENDAR

we are discussing this year's possibilities
and i say, "the only good ones seem
to be of monet's works, and i like ones
that i can write about. how much can you

say about paintings of shimmering light with
no people in them, and how many times can
you get away with saying it?"

and she says, "i think that's precisely what
i'd like you to write: poems with no
people in them."

THE SPLURGE

it is my birthday. i turn
fifty-three. i decide to
treat myself to whatever
lunch i truly desire, the
cost be damned.

my taste buds do not
lead me to the pine avenue
fish house or spago's or
ma maison, but to

poncho's, on pacific coast
highway, for a chorizo tostada
and a chicken enchilada, a la
carte, and a ten-ounce bottle
of coca-cola poured over ice.
it's been a while since i have
eaten at poncho's, although
i have innumerable times done
so over the past thirty years.

tip included, the tab comes to
less than ten dollars. in my
opinion mexican food is getting
a bit pricey, but, on this day,
there is no lunch i could have
enjoyed more.

INVERTED PYRAMID

a long time ago a student of
mine, mike ward, advised me:
"never deny it when anyone
accuses you of getting laid,
whether or not it's true. everybody
wants a winner."

it was a demotic variant
of "nothing succeeds like success"
or even of oscar wilde's "nothing
succeeds like excess."